

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 01573 172124Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
-----172129 083678 /51

O R 172050Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9956
INFO /USIA WASHDC 6096

S E C R E T BOGOTA 01573

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ASEC, PINS, CASC, CO
SUBJECT: KIDNAPPING OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER: SITREP 10

REF: STATE 036418

1. EL BOGOTANO OF FEB17 ALREADY ON STREETS BY TIME
REF MESSAGE RECEIVED, CARRIES NOTHING FUTHER ON
STARR CASE, AND PREDICATBLY NO MENTION OF EMBASSY DENIAL
OF CIA CONNECTION. USIS RELEASE HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN
PLAYED THUS FAR AS FOLLOWS:

- RELEASE USED IN ITS ENTIRETY ON 6-6:30 AM
BROADCAST THIS MORNING BY TOLEDAR RADIO NETWORK WHICH
HAS 70 MEDIUM WAVE TRANSMITTING STATIONS COVERING
VIRTUALLY ENTIRE COUNTRY.

- OTHER TWO BOGOTA AFTERNOON TABLOIDS, EL ESPACIO,
AND EL VESPERTINO, (LATTER WITH FRONT PAGE STARR PHOTO)
HAVE ON USIS URGING CARRIED THE USIS RELEASE TODAY
FEB 17.

EL TIEMPO EDITOR HAD PROMISED US YESTERDAY THAT RELEASE
WOULD BE MADE PART OF TODAY'S STORY, BUT UNFORTUNATE

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MIXUP AT LOWER LEVELS CAUSED IT TO BE DROPPED FROM TODAY'S
EDITION. WE ARE SEEKING COMMITMENT BY BOTH EL TIEMPO
AND ESPECTADOR THAT EMBASSY DENIAL OF CIA CONNECTION
WILL APPEAR IN FEB 18 EDITIONS OF THESE TWO LARGEST
CIRCULATION DAILIES OF COUNTRY.

2. TO SET EL BOGOTANO IN PRESS CONTEXT, ITS APPROXIMATE

80,000 CIRCULATION IS LARGELY CONFINED TO BOGOTA AREA. TO DATE WE ARE NOT AWARE OF ANY OTHER PAPER CARRYING SIMILAR CIA ACCUSATION NOR HAS A CHECK WITH THREE CONSULAR CITIES TURNED UP ANY PICK-UP OF EL BOGOTANO STORY. BOGOTANO IS GENERALLY DETESTED BY OTHER PAPERS IN COUNTRY AND HAS FREQUENTLY INCURRED WRATH OF GOVERNMENT FOR ITS WILD, SENSATIONAL STYLE OF JOURNALISM. EDITOR-DIRECTOR CONSUELO DE MONTEJO, (WHO, INCIDENTALLY, HOLDS US RESIDENT GREEN CARD) IS SUBJECT TO LITTLE INFLUENCE FROM ANY QUARTER. SHE IS ALSO BOGOTA MUNICIPAL COUNSELOR AND HAS INVOKED IMMUNITY OF THIS POSITION TO AVOID BEING HAULED INTO COURT ON LIBEL CHARGES. DESPITE THIS, PC DIRECTOR AND PAO WILL BE CONTACTING MONTEJO'S DEPUTY THIS AFTERNOON (SHE IS OUT OF TOWN) TO MAKE HUMANITARIAN APPEAL FOR CORRECTION OR RETRACTION OF ITEM FOLLOWING LINES SUGGESTED IN REFTTEL, IN INTEREST LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED.

3. BELIEVE BOTH MEDIUM WAVE AND SHORT WAVE RADIO MAY BE BEST MEANS DIRECTLY TO INFORM AND INFLUENCE THOSE PRESENTLY HOLDING STARR, AND PRESS AND RADIO BEST CHANNELS TO INFORM ANY OTHERS WHO MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO COOPERATE WITH THAT TERRORIST GROUP IN EXPLOITING THIS KIDNAPPING. TO THIS END, HAVE PREPARED STORY WHICH HAVE PHONED TO VOA CORRESPONDENT ORTIZ IN PANAMA FOR HIM TO VOICE AND FEED TO VOA WASHINGTON FOR USE IN EVENING SPANISH BROADCASTS TO AREA. SUGGEST DEPT TASK FORCE CONTACT VOA TO REVIEW AND AUTHORIZE THIS REPORT.

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4. WE ARE INFORMING AMBASSADOR MORALES, THE FOREIGN

MINISTRY'S LIAISON OFFICER IN THIS CASE, OF OUR ACTION. WE STRONGLY DOUBT THAT GOC WOULD WISH TO TAKE PARALLEL ACTION AND WE THINK ON BALANCE THAT THIS WOULD BE INADVISABLE BECAUSE IT WOULD ENABLE THE PUBLISHER TO CHARGE GOVERNMENT PRESSURE AND THUS ADD AN UNHELPFUL NEW DIMENSION TO THE PROBLEM. SANCHEZ

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

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